



Australian Bureau of Statistics

6224.0.55.001 - Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, Jun 2011

Previous ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 28/09/2011

Summary

Contents

CONTENTS



In this Issue



What is a Family?

How do we define a 'family' and what exactly are 'dependants'?



Australian Families

In Jun 2011, there were an estimated 6.4 million families in Australia with 19.2 million family members. 3.4 million people did not live in a family unit.



Couple Families

Of the 5.4 million couple families in Australia in Jun 2011, 80% had at least one partner employed.



Lone Parent Families

In Jun 2011, there were 950 thousand lone parent families and 83% of these were single mums.



Jobless Families

There were 1.2 million jobless families in Jun 2011 and 1 in every 4 had dependent children.



Dependants aged 15 to 24

Over 40% of Australia's 1.3 million dependent students were employed.



Data Visualisation on BetaWorks

Examples of animated graphs that may be used in future publications



Suggestions and Feedback

As part of a review of Labour Force products, we are currently seeking user feedback and suggestions on the format and contents of this publication.

About this Release

The annual datacubes contain detailed information about labour force status and other characteristics of families using original data collected in the Labour Force Survey.

Expanded Contents

CONTENTS

[In this Issue](#)
[What is a Family?](#)
[Australian Families](#)
[Couple Families](#)
[Lone Parent Families](#)
[Jobless Families](#)
[Dependants aged 15 to 24](#)
[Suggestions and Feedback](#)

In this Issue

[Contents >> In this Issue](#)



IN THIS ISSUE

[Next Section: What is a Family? >>](#)

INTRODUCTION

This publication presents information about the labour force status and characteristics of families in June 2011. Information is also provided on the number and age of children in the household.

The information in this publication was collected as part of the monthly Labour Force Survey that was conducted in June 2011. Family type has been derived from questions which establish the relationships between members of the households selected in the survey.

Relationship in household and families data are collected each month in the Labour Force Survey and published in **Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery** (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001) as estimates that relate to the number of persons. In contrast, estimates provided in this publication relate to the number of families instead of the number of persons. Estimates are also provided for the number of children aged 0–4, 5–9 and 10–14 in families. Children are normally considered outside of the scope of the labour force survey but are included in this publication because of the focus on family characteristics.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

What is a Family?

[Contents >> What is a Family?](#)



WHAT IS A FAMILY?

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

In this publication, a family is a group of two or more people that are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who usually live together in the same household. This includes newlyweds without children, gay partners, couples with dependants, single mums or dads with children, siblings living together, and many other variations. At least one person in the family has to be over 15.

TYPES OF FAMILIES

There are three main types of families: couple families, lone parent families, and other families.

- Couple families are based around a couple relationship between two people who are either married or in a de facto partnership. Couples can be gay or straight, and their dependants or children may also be members of the couple family if they all reside in the same household.
- Lone parent families are based on a person who is not in a couple relationship, but forms a parent-child relationship with at least one other person in the household. Couple families can exist without children - that is just two people living together in a couple relationship. Lone parent families, on the other hand, can't exist without children - there must be at least two people to form a family.
- Other families are based around family relationships that are neither couple relationships nor parent-child relationships, such as a brother and sister living together without any dependants.

In some cases, a household will contain more than one family. For example, a single mum with a baby, living with her parents forms two families. The parents and their daughter are one family. The daughter and her baby form another family. We separate such cases into two family units.

WHAT IS NOT A FAMILY?

Divorced or separated parents who live alone, but have children who usually live elsewhere, are not considered to be in a family. Even though a parent-child relationship exists - they might even have custody each weekend say - if they usually live in a household by themselves they aren't classed as living in a family according to ABS definitions. People who live by themselves in one house while their parents live in a different house are treated the same way. Even though they are **part** of a family, unless they live in the same household they don't **form** a family for the purpose of these statistics.

People who aren't related and living in the same household, such as students sharing a flat, aren't considered to be a family unless one of the members of the household is under 15. In such cases, children under 15 are considered to be financially dependent, and so, if they aren't living with their parent or guardian, they form a child dependency relationship with the oldest member of a household (the family head), thereby forming a lone parent family. Furthermore, if a child under the age of 15 has a child or a partner/spouse of their own, then

that relationship is not recorded. These situations are not encountered in the survey very often and have little impact on the estimates.

WHAT IS A DEPENDANT?

Families can be classed as having - or not having - dependants. There are two kinds of dependants: children under 15, and dependent students aged 15 to 24 who are studying full-time and living with their parents. These children are financially dependent on the parent or parents that they live with, which is why they are called 'dependants'. They have to be living in the same household though; full-time students who have left home to study and live by themselves are not part of a family, even if they are financially dependent on parents who live elsewhere.

Children aged over 15 who are not full-time students are considered to be eligible to join the labour force and so are no longer dependent on their parents - even if they still live at home. It is also possible to have lone parent families without dependants. Consider an 80 year old woman living with her 55 year old daughter - this is defined as a lone parent family without dependants, even though it's not what we typically think of when we think of a single mum with child.

It's important to consider whether children in a household are dependent on their parents when looking at these estimates, as the labour force characteristics will vary significantly between families who have dependants and those that don't.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

Australian Families

[Contents >> Australian Families](#)



AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES

[<<< Previous Section: What is a Family?](#)

[Next Section: Couple Families >>](#)

AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES

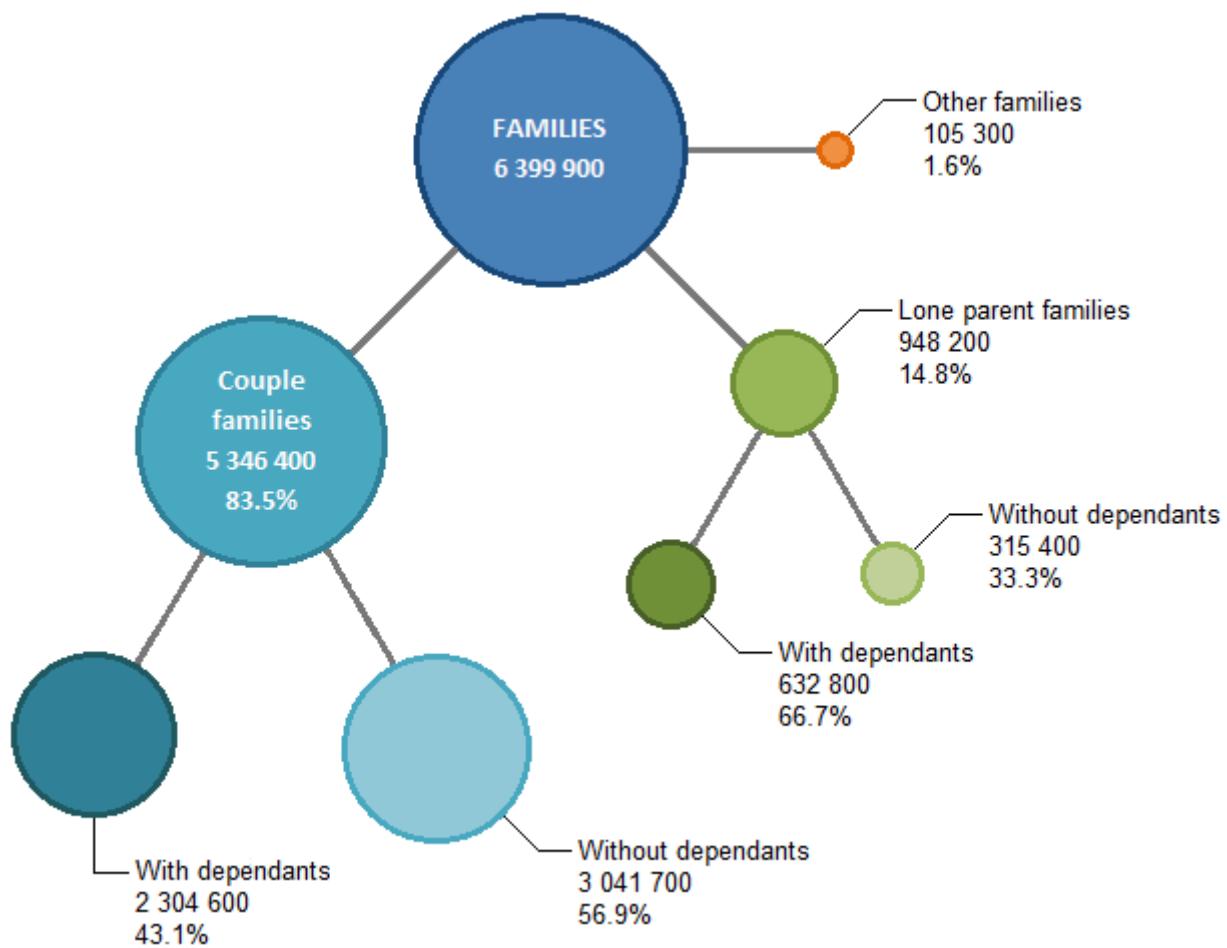
In June 2011, there were an estimated 6.4 million families living in Australia with a total of 19 million family members. An estimated 3.4 million people were not living with family and of those 60% lived alone.

The vast majority of families were couple families (84%). About 2 in every 5 couple families had dependants living with them (43%).

The next largest group were lone parent families (15%) and 2 out of every 3 lone parent families had dependants living with them (67%). Of the 950 thousand lone parent families, 83% were single mothers.

Of all families, 80% had at least one employed family member aged 15 years and over.

Some 7% of families had one or more members unemployed. Just under half of all families had a member who was not in the labour force, while in 17% of all families every member was not in the labour force (for example, retired couples).



[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

Couple Families

[Contents >> Couple Families](#)



COUPLE FAMILIES

[<< Previous Section: Australian Families](#)

[Next Section: Lone Parent Families >>](#)

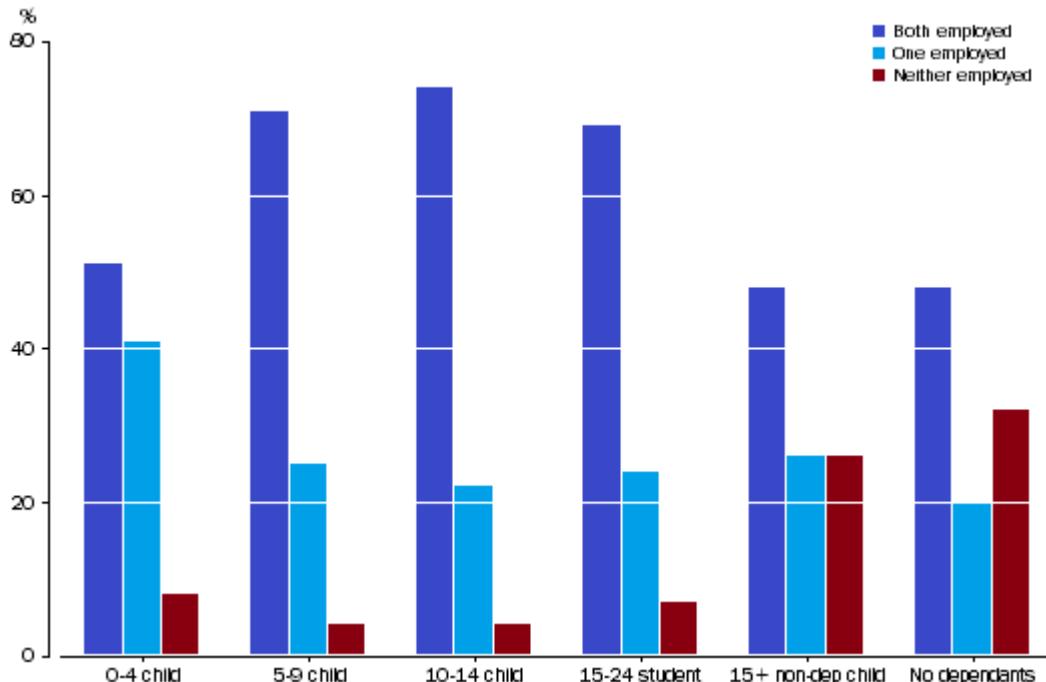
COUPLE FAMILIES

As noted in [What is a Family?](#), couple families are based around a couple relationship between two people who are either married or in a de facto partnership. and includes couples with or without children or dependants, gay partners and other variations.

In June 2011, there were:

- 2.3 million opposite-sex couple families with dependants
- 3 million opposite-sex couple families without dependants
- 33 thousand same-sex couple families

COUPLE FAMILIES, Employment status by age of youngest dependant—Jun 2011



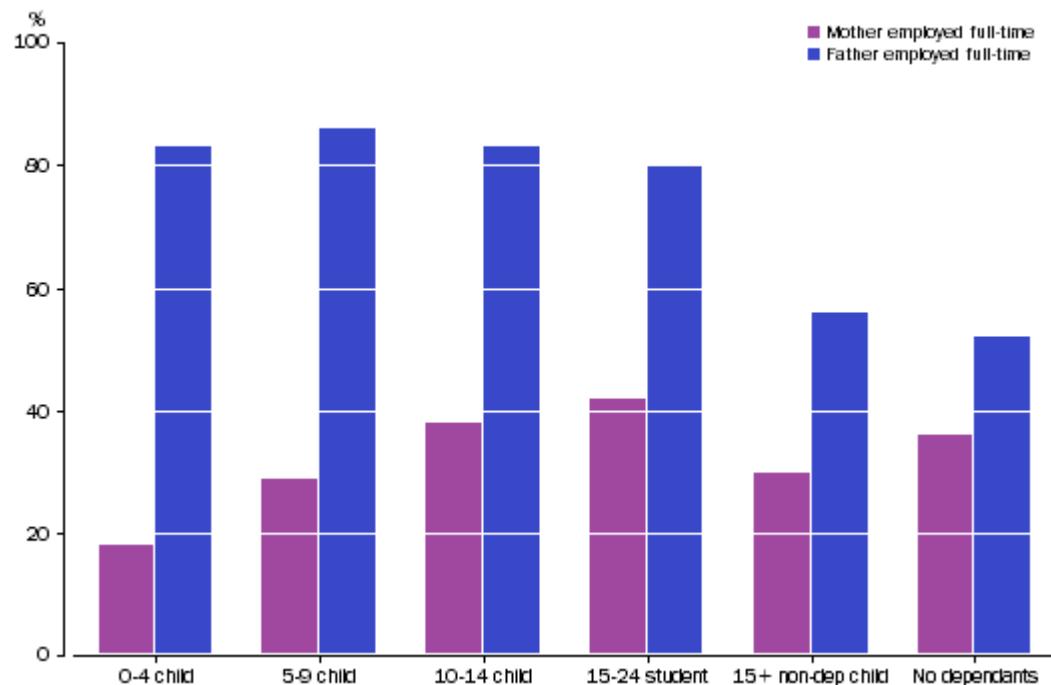
COUPLE FAMILIES WITH DEPENDANTS

The proportion of couple families with dependants in which one or both partners were employed was 94% in June 2011

The father was employed in 90% of all opposite-sex couples with dependants. In 93% of these cases, the father was employed full-time.

The mother was employed in 67% of opposite-sex couple families with dependants. The proportion where the mother was employed full-time has remained steady at 28%. This proportion increases with the age of the youngest dependant, from 18% for mothers of 0–4 year olds to 42% of mothers of young people aged 15–24.

OPPOSITE-SEX COUPLE FAMILIES, Employment status by sex and age of youngest dependant—Jun 2011



COUPLE FAMILIES WITHOUT DEPENDANTS

In June 2011, 57% of couple families had no dependants.

Both partners were 45 or older in 71% of couple families without dependants. Of those, 58% were families where at least one partner was employed.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

Lone Parent Families

[Contents >> Lone Parent Families](#)



LONE PARENT FAMILIES

[<< Previous Section: Couple Families](#)

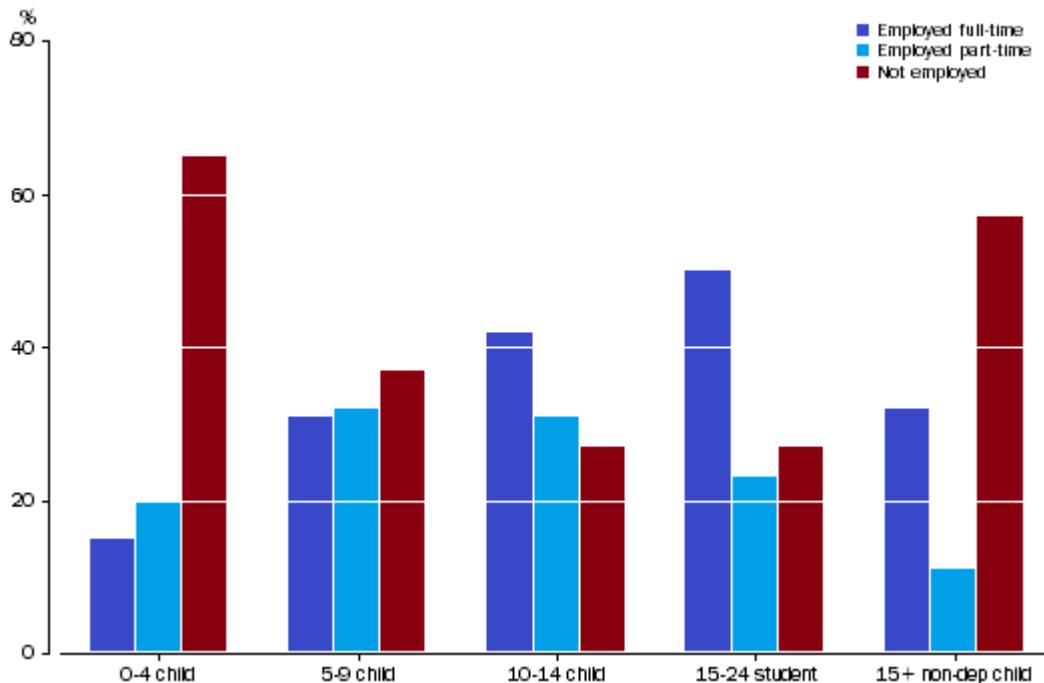
[Next Section: Jobless Families >>](#)

LONE PARENT FAMILIES

In June 2011, there were 950 thousand lone parent families, making up 15% of all families. About two-thirds of these lone parents were living with their dependants.

There were 780 thousand single mother families in June 2011, making up the vast majority of lone parent families (83%).

LONE PARENT FAMILIES, Employment status by age of youngest dependant—Jun 2011

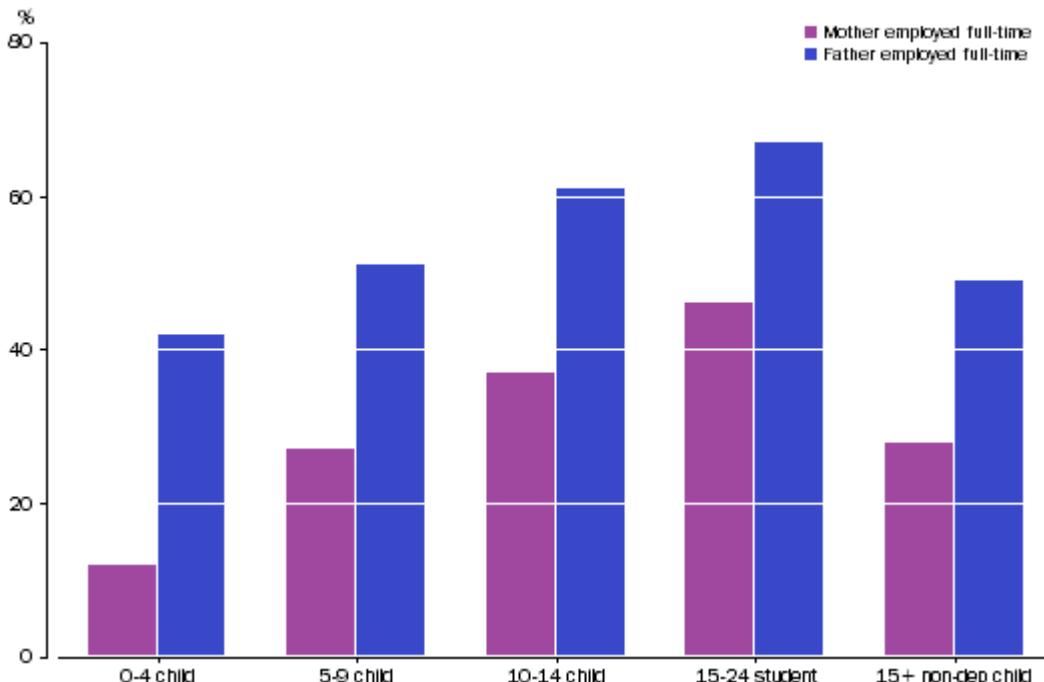


LONE PARENT FAMILIES WITH DEPENDANTS

In June 2011, there were 630 thousand lone parent families with dependants, and again most (84%) were single mother families. In a little over half (54%) of lone parent families with dependants, the age of the youngest child was between 0 and 9 years old.

The parent was employed in 59% of lone parent families with dependants in June 2011. In these families, 70% of single fathers were employed compared with 57% of single mothers. Employment among single parents generally increased as the age of the youngest dependant increased, with 73% of single parent families whose youngest dependant was 15–24 years old having an employed parent, compared with 35% whose youngest dependant under 5.

LONE PARENT FAMILIES, Employment status by sex and age of youngest dependant—Jun 2011



Jobless Families

[Contents >> Jobless Families](#)



JOBLESS FAMILIES

[<< Previous Section: Lone Parent Families](#)

[Next Section: Dependents aged 15 to 24 >>](#)

JOBLESS FAMILIES

A jobless family is a family where neither the parents nor any dependants over 15 are employed. In a jobless family, all of the family members are either unemployed or not in the labour force. Families that have no employed members but do have members that are "undetermined in the scope of the labour force survey," such as members of the permanent Australian defence force, are not included in the number of jobless families.

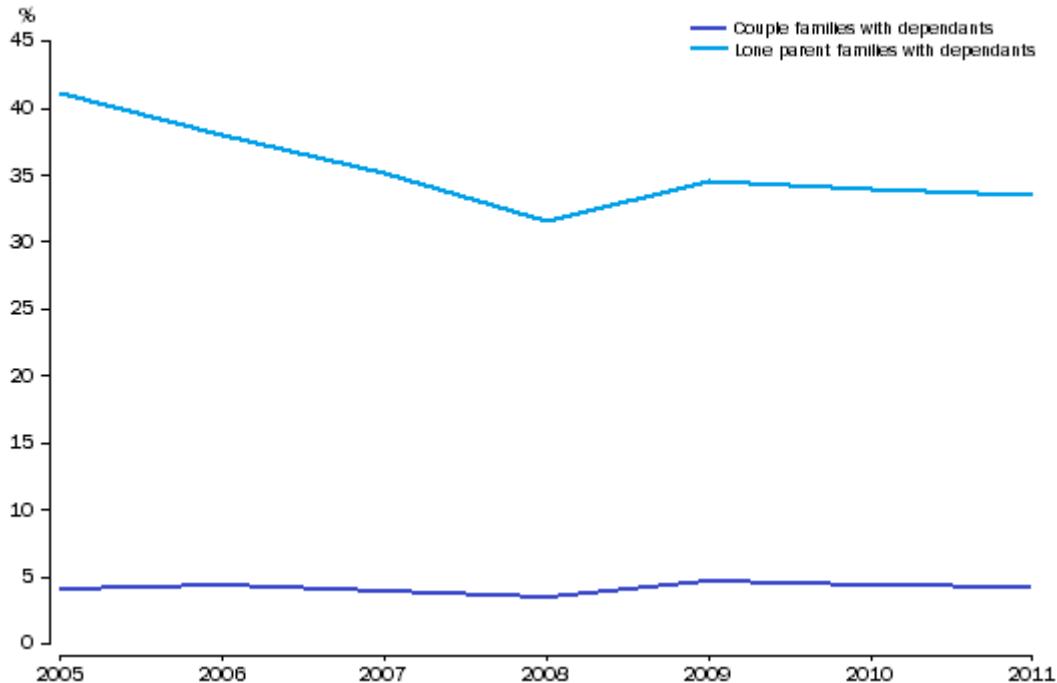
In June 2011, there were 1.2 million jobless families - some 19% of all families. Of these, 910 thousand were jobless couple families - about 1 in every 6 couple families - and 290 thousand jobless lone parent families - almost 1 in every 3 lone parent families.

JOBLESS FAMILIES WITH DEPENDANTS

About 96 thousand couple families with dependants had all family members over 15 jobless - which is about 1 in every 24 couple families with dependants. In families where either or both partners were actively looking for work, almost 1 in 3 had been looking for longer than a year. In almost three quarters of jobless couple families with dependants, the age of the youngest child was 0–9 years.

There were 180 thousand children aged 0–14 in jobless couple families in June 2011.

FAMILIES WITH DEPENDANTS, Percentage Jobless by Family Type—2005-2011

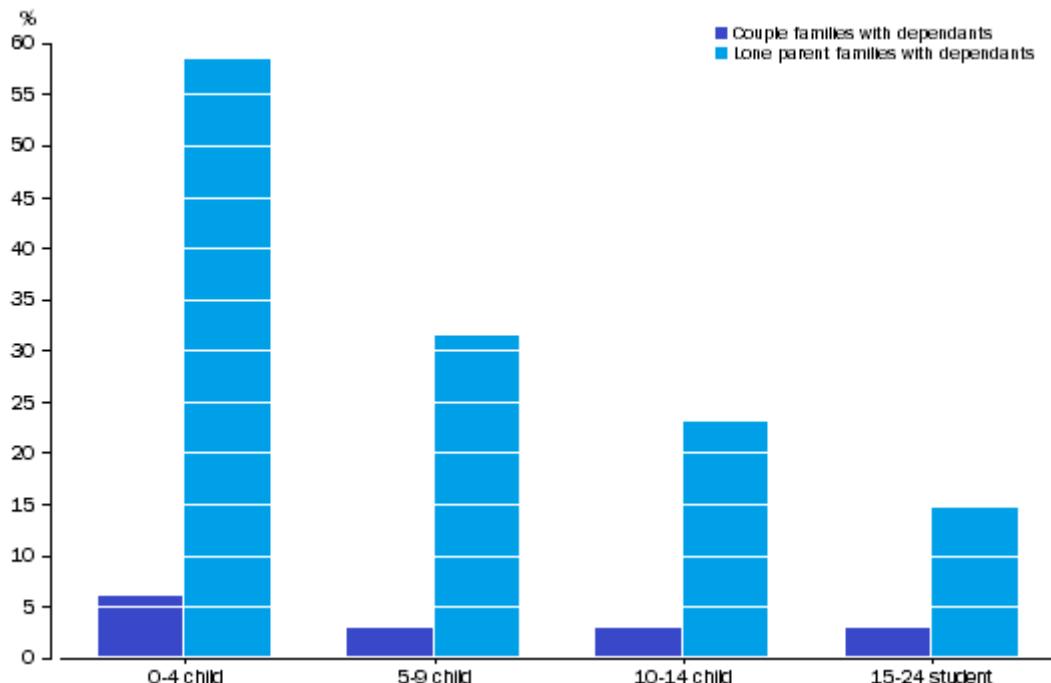


In June 2011, there were 210 thousand jobless lone parent families with dependants - about one third of all lone parent families with dependants. Of these families, 89% were single mother families and 74% had children under 10 years old.

In 23% of jobless lone parent families where the parent was unemployed, the duration of unemployment was a year or longer.

The number of children aged 0–14 in jobless lone parent families was 340 thousand in June 2011.

FAMILIES WITH DEPENDANTS, Percentage Jobless by Family type and Age of youngest dependant—Jun 2011



Dependants aged 15 to 24

[Contents >> Dependents aged 15 to 24](#)



DEPENDANTS AGED 15 TO 24

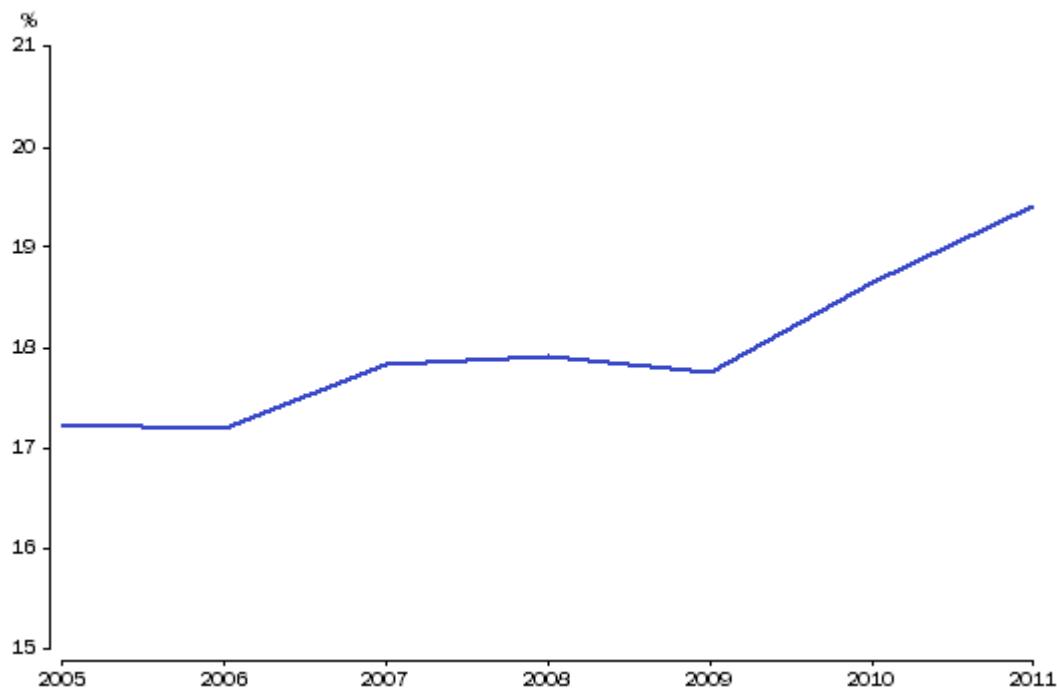
[<< Previous Section: Jobless Families](#)

[Next Section: Suggestions and Feedback >>](#)

DEPENDANTS AGED 15 TO 24

The number of families with the age of youngest dependant between 15 and 24 has increased over the past 7 years, from 17% in 2005 to 19% in 2011. 75% of these families are couple families.

COUPLE AND LONE PARENT FAMILIES WITH DEPENDANTS, Age of youngest dependant 15 to 24—Jun 2011



Of the 1.3 million dependent students studying full-time and living with their parents, 43% were employed, 6% were unemployed and the rest were not in the labour force.

NON-DEPENDENT CHILDREN AGED 15 TO 24

The percentage of families with non-dependent children aged 15 to 24 was 9% in 2011. 71% of these families were couple families.

Of the 840 thousand non-dependent children aged 15 to 24, 79% were employed, 10% were unemployed with the remainder not in the labour force.

Suggestions and Feedback

[Contents >> Suggestions and Feedback](#)



SUGGESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

[**<< Previous Section: Dependents aged 15 to 24**](#)

As part of a review of Labour Force products, we are currently seeking user feedback and suggestions about the format and contents of **Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families** (cat. no. 6224.0.55.001).

If you have any suggestions, please contact us by email at labourforce@abs.gov.au or by phone on (02) 6252 6525.

[Previous Page](#)

Explanatory Notes

Explanatory Notes

EXPLANATORY NOTES

This publication, **Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families** (cat. no. 6224.0.55.001), is produced from data collected in the June Labour Force Survey. It includes detailed family data not featured in the monthly **Labour Force, Australia** (cat. no. 6202.0) or **Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery** (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001) publications.

Since these products are all based on data collected in the Labour Force Survey, the Explanatory Notes of publication **Labour Force, Australia** (cat. no. 6202.0) are relevant to all three publications. Additional information is provided in **Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods** (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001).

Family data was collected for civilians aged 15 years and over who were usual residents of private dwellings and whose family status could be derived. Certain exclusions typical to the Labour Force Survey were applied, including excluding families who contain foreign diplomatic or defence personnel stationed in Australia, or overseas visitors on temporary visas. Persons interviewed in the Labour Force Survey who were classed as visitors to private dwellings, and those living in non-private dwellings (including hotels, motels, hospitals and other institutions) were also excluded. After these exclusions are applied, the estimates in this publication cover approximately 81% of the survey sample.

From October 2008, the method of producing family estimates from the Labour Force

Survey was improved to include the following:

- an expanded scope to include households containing permanent members of the Australian defence forces that are usually excluded from labour force estimates;
- an increased range of families in the LFS sample contributing to the family estimates; and
- improvements to the weighting method by utilising independent population benchmarks (of persons and households), ensuring the estimates more closely reflect the Australian population.

For more information, see the **Information Paper: Improvements to Family Estimates from the Labour Force Survey** (cat. no. 6224.0.55.002).

In July 2010, monthly Labour Force Survey estimates were compiled using population benchmarks that incorporated revisions made to Net Overseas Migration estimates in the September 2008 and September 2009 issues of **Australian Demographic Statistics** (cat. no 3101.0). Historical families estimates re-published in this publication have not yet been revised to incorporate this revision. These updates will be applied in the usual five-yearly revision of LFS data after the establishment of population benchmarks based on the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, adjusted for under-enumeration and updated for births, deaths, interstate migration, and net overseas migration. For more information about the revisions to monthly LFS estimates, refer to the article Revised Population Benchmarks in the July 2010 issue of **Labour Force, Australia** (cat. no. 6202.0).

Glossary

GLOSSARY

This publication, **Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families** (cat. no. 6224.0.55.001) is produced from data collected in the June Labour Force Survey. It includes detailed family data not featured in the monthly **Labour Force, Australia** (cat. no. 6202.0) or **Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery** (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001) publications.

Since these products are all based on data collected in the Labour Force Survey, the Glossary of publication **Labour Force, Australia** (cat. no. 6202.0) is relevant to all three publications. Additional information is provided in **Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods** (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001) and **Labour Force Survey Standard Products and Data Item Guide** (cat. no. 6103.0).

The following glossary items are provided as they relate specifically to family characteristics.

IN THIS SECTION

Child
Couple Family
Dependant
Family
Family Head

Family Type
Father
Household
Husband/Head
Jobless Family
Lone Parent Family
Mother
Non-dependent Child
Non-private Dwelling
Opposite-sex Couple
Other Families
Private Dwelling
Relationship in Household
Same-sex Couple
Social Marital Status
Single Fathers
Single Mothers
Tertiary Educational Institution
Usual Resident
Wife/Partner

Child

A child is defined as any individual under the age of 15, usually resident in the household, who forms a parent-child relationship with another member in the household. This includes otherwise related or unrelated children under the age of 15.

In order to be classified as a child, the person can have no partner or child of his/her own usually resident in the household. If a person is under the age of 15 and has a child or partner/spouse these relationships are not recorded.

The types of parent-child relationships which can be formed are via a natural, adoptive, step, foster or child dependency relationship. The child dependency relationships may be an otherwise related or unrelated child under the age of 15 (e.g. nephew or niece).

The categories are designed to identify families with different structures and needs. Dependency, as used in these classifications, refers to economic dependency and is only applied to the part of the population that can be described as 'children'.

The dependency criterion is based on the barriers to full-time employment: age and student status. Essentially, once a child turns 15 and becomes eligible to be included in the labour force, they lose their dependency status unless they are attending full-time education at either school or a tertiary educational institution and continue to live in the same household as their parents.

See also Non-dependent Child.

[Back to top](#)

Couple Family

A couple family is based on two persons who are in a registered or de facto marriage and who are usually resident in the same household (see Social Marital Status). The family may

or may not include any number of dependants, non-dependants and other related individuals. A couple family may also consist of a couple without children present in the household.

A 'couple relationship' includes same-sex couples.

[Back to top](#)

Dependant

A dependant is a family member who is either:

- under 15 years of age (ie children);
- aged 15–19 and attending school or aged 15–24 and attending a tertiary educational institution full time (ie dependent students)

In order to be classified as a dependant, the person can have no partner or child of his/her own usually resident in the household. A separate family in the household is formed in this instance. If a person is under the age of 15 years and has a child or partner/spouse these relationships are not recorded.

[Back to top](#)

Family

A family is defined in LFS as two or more persons, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household.

The basis of a family is formed by identifying the presence of either a couple relationship, lone parent-child relationship or other blood relationship. Some households therefore, contain more than one family.

Non-related persons living in the same household are not counted as family members (unless under 15 years of age).

Other related individuals (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles) may be present in the household. If more than one family is present these people can only be associated with the primary family.

[Back to top](#)

Family Head

Any person without a spouse present:

- with a son or daughter aged under 15 present; or
- without a son or daughter aged under 15 present, but with a son or daughter aged 15 or over present (provided that the son or daughter has no spouse, son or daughter of his/her own present).

Where a family has no person falling into either of these categories, the family head is generally defined to be the eldest person in the family.

No family head is determined for a couple family.

[Back to top](#)

Family Type

The categories for family type are:

- Couple family
 - Couple family with dependants
 - Couple family with children under 15
 - Couple family without children under 15, but with dependent students
 - Couple family without dependants
 - Couple family without dependants, but with children 15 years or older (ie non-dependent child)
 - Couple family without children
- Lone parent family
 - Lone parent family with dependants
 - Lone parent family with children under 15
 - Lone parent family without children under 15, but with dependent students
 - Lone parent family without dependants, but with children 15 years or older (ie non-dependent child)
- Other families

[Back to top](#)

Father

The male parent of an opposite-sex couple with dependants and/or children. The relationship between a father and a child/dependant can be formed via a natural, adoptive, step, foster or child dependency relationship.

[Back to top](#)

Household

A group of one or more persons in a private dwelling who consider themselves to be separate from other persons (if any) in the dwelling, and who make regular provision to take meals separately from other persons, i.e. at different times or in different rooms. Lodgers who receive accommodation but not meals are treated as separate households. Boarders who receive both accommodation and meals are not treated as separate households. A household may consist of any number of families and non-family members.

[Back to top](#)

Husband/Head

In a couple family, the Husband/Head is the male partner of an opposite-sex couple, or the eldest partner of a same-sex couple. It applies to both registered marriages and de facto relationships.

[Back to top](#)

Jobless Family

A jobless family is a family where neither the parents nor any dependants over 15 are employed.

In a jobless family, all of the family members are either unemployed or not in the labour force.

Families that have no employed members but do have members that are undetermined in the scope of the labour force survey, such as members of the permanent Australian defence force, are not included in the number of jobless families.

[Back to top](#)

Lone Parent Family

A lone parent family consists of a person who has no spouse or partner usually present in the household, but who forms a parent-child relationship with at least one child usually resident in the household. The child may be either dependent or non-dependent.

If a lone parent has no children or dependants usually resident in the household, they are classified as a person living alone and are not regarded as a family.

Previously referred to as sole parents.

[Back to top](#)

Mother

The female parent of an opposite-sex couple with dependants and/or children. The relationship between a mother and a child/dependant can be formed via a natural, adoptive, step, foster or child dependency relationship.

[Back to top](#)

Non-dependent Child

A non-dependent child is defined as any individual aged 15 years and over, usually resident in the household, who forms a parent-child relationship with another member in the household.

In order to be classified as a child, the person can have no partner or child of his/her own usually resident in the household. A separate family in the household is formed in this instance.

The types of parent-child relationships which can be formed are via a natural, adoptive, step, or foster relationships.

The categories are designed to identify families with different structures and needs. Dependency, as used in these classifications, refers to economic dependency and is only applied to the part of the population that can be described as 'children'.

The dependency criterion is based on the barriers to full time employment: age and student status. Essentially, once a child turns 15 and becomes eligible to be included in the labour

force, they lose their dependency status unless they are attending full-time education at either school or a tertiary educational institution and continue to live in the same household as their parents.

See also Child.

[Back to top](#)

Non-private Dwelling

An establishment which provides a communal type of accommodation, such as a hotel, motel, hospital or other institution. Family data is not collected from non-private dwellings.

[Back to top](#)

Opposite-sex Couple

Two persons of the opposite sex who are in a couple relationship and are usually resident in the same household. Also known as a 'straight' relationship.

[Back to top](#)

Other Families

Families which are neither couple families nor one parent families, as defined. They include families in which there is no parent, for example, a family head living with a brother or sister.

[Back to top](#)

Private Dwelling

A residential structure which is self-contained, owned or rented by the occupants, and intended solely for residential use. A private dwelling may be a flat, part of a house, or even a room, but can also be a house attached to, or rooms above shops or offices. Family data is only collected from private dwellings.

[Back to top](#)

Relationship in Household

The relationship of all persons usually resident in a household to the household reference person (ie Family Head). Where the relationship to the household reference person is other than a couple relationship or a parent-child relationship, a closer relationship to another household member is recorded, if one exists.

[Back to top](#)

Same-sex Couple

Two persons of the same sex who are in a couple relationship and are usually resident in

the same household. Also known as a gay, lesbian or homosexual relationship.

[Back to top](#)

Social Marital Status

Social marital status is the relationship status of an individual with reference to another person who is usually resident in the household. A marriage exists when two people live together as husband and wife, or partners, regardless of whether the marriage is formalised through registration. Individuals are, therefore, regarded as married if they are in a de facto relationship, or if they are living with the person to whom they are registered as married.

[Back to top](#)

Single Fathers

A lone parent family where the parent is male.

[Back to top](#)

Single Mothers

A lone parent family where the parent is female.

[Back to top](#)

Tertiary Educational Institution

A Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college, university, or other educational institution, excluding primary schools and secondary schools (ie High School)

[Back to top](#)

Usual Resident

A person who usually lives in that particular dwelling and regards it as their own or main home.

[Back to top](#)

Wife/Partner

In a couple family, the Wife/Partner is the female partner of an opposite-sex couple, or the youngest partner of a same-sex couple. It applies to both registered marriages and de facto relationships.

[Back to top](#)

Quality Declaration - Summary

QUALITY DECLARATION - SUMMARY

IN THIS SECTION

Institutional Environment
Relevance
Timeliness
Accuracy
Coherence
Interpretability
Accessibility

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

For information on the institutional environment of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, please see [ABS Institutional Environment](#).

[Back to top](#)

RELEVANCE

This collection presents information about the labour force status and other characteristics of families. The information is based on data collected in the national monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS).

[Back to top](#)

TIMELINESS

The Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families is based on data collected from the June Labour Force Survey each year. The results obtained from this data are released approximately 4–5 months after the collection period.

[Back to top](#)

ACCURACY

The Labour Force Survey is based on a sample of private dwellings (approximately 29,000 houses, flats etc) and non-private dwellings, such as hotels and motels. The sample covers about 0.33% of the Australian civilian population aged 15 years or over. The Labour Force Survey is designed primarily to provide estimates of key labour force statistics for the whole of Australia and, secondarily, for each state and territory.

Annual family estimates are produced from the data collected in the June Labour Force Survey, but does not include people interviewed in non-private dwellings and those who were visitors to private dwellings. This covered 81% of the survey sample.

Two types of error are possible in an estimate based on a sample survey: non-sampling error and sampling error.

Non-sampling error arises from inaccuracies in collecting, recording and processing the

data. Every effort is made to minimise reporting error by the careful design of questionnaires, intensive training and supervision of interviewers, and efficient data processing procedures. Non-sampling error also arises because information cannot be obtained from all persons selected in the survey. The Labour Force Survey receives a high level of cooperation, with an average response rate for the last year being 97%.

Sampling error occurs because a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed. One measure of the likely difference resulting from not including all dwellings in the survey is given by the standard error. There are about two chances in three (66%) that a sample estimate will differ by less than one standard error from the figure that would have been obtained if all dwellings had been included in the survey, and about nineteen chances in twenty (95%) that the difference will be less than two standard errors.

Standard errors are discussed further in Technical Note - Standard Errors. The standard error of annual family estimates may be calculated by using the spreadsheet contained in **Labour Force Survey Standard Errors, Data Cube** (cat. no. 6298.0.55.001).

[Back to top](#)

COHERENCE

The ABS has been producing the Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families since November 1974. While seeking to provide a high degree of consistency and comparability over time by minimising changes to the survey, sound survey practice requires careful and continuing maintenance and development to maintain the integrity of the data and the efficiency of the collection.

From October 2008, the method of producing family estimates from the Labour Force Survey was improved to include the following:

- an expanded scope to include households containing permanent members of the Australian defence forces that are usually excluded from labour force estimates;
- an increased range of families in the LFS sample contributing to the family estimates; and
- improvements to the weighting method by utilising independent population benchmarks (of persons and households), ensuring the estimates more closely reflect the Australian population.

Estimates back to August 2004 have been revised using the new method of estimation. For more information, see the **Information Paper: Improvements to Family Estimates from the Labour Force Survey** (cat. no. 6224.0.55.002).

In July 2010, monthly Labour Force Survey estimates were compiled using population benchmarks that incorporated revisions made to Net Overseas Migration estimates in the September 2008 and September 2009 issues of **Australian Demographic Statistics** (cat. no 3101.0). Historical families estimates re-published in this publication have not yet been revised to incorporate this revision. These updates will be applied in the usual five-yearly revision of LFS data after the establishment of population benchmarks based on the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, adjusted for under-enumeration and updated for births, deaths, interstate migration, and net overseas migration. For more information about the revisions to monthly LFS estimates, refer to the article Revised Population Benchmarks in the July 2010 issue of **Labour Force, Australia** (cat. no. 6202.0).

[Back to top](#)

INTERPRETABILITY

The Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families release contains a summary of findings (Australian Families, Couple Families, Lone Parent Families, Jobless Families, and Dependents aged 15 to 24) to aid interpretation of the results of the survey. Explanatory notes, a technical note, a glossary and an explanation of the terms 'family' and 'dependant' (in What is a Family?) are also included to further aid in the interpretation of the results. Details of the methodology and concepts used are also provided in a separate **Information Paper: Improvements to Family Estimates from the Labour Force Survey** (cat. no. 6224.0.55.002).

[Back to top](#)

ACCESSIBILITY

The main products from this collection are an Excel spreadsheet summary and a series of SuperTABLE Data Cubes (available in Downloads) that are released electronically via the ABS website. Additional data may be available on request.

[Back to top](#)

For further information about these and related statistics, contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070, email client.services@abs.gov.au or Labour Force on Canberra (02) 6252 6525, email labourforce@abs.gov.au

[Back to top](#)

Technical Note - Standard Errors (Technical Note)

TECHNICAL NOTE - STANDARD ERRORS

STANDARD ERRORS

The estimates in this publication are based on information gained from the occupants of a sample survey of dwellings. Because the entire population is not surveyed, the published estimates are subject to sampling error. The most common way of quantifying such sampling error is to calculate the standard error for the published estimate or statistic. For more information, see paragraphs 25 to 27 of the **Explanatory Notes** of publication **Labour Force, Australia** (cat. no. 6202.0)

To illustrate, let us say the published level estimate for couple families with children aged 0–4 is 950,000 and the associated standard error is 13,600. The standard error is then used to interpret the level estimate of 950,000. For instance, the standard error of 13,600 indicates that:

- There are approximately two chances in three (66%) that the real value falls within the range 636,400 to 963,600 (950,000 + or - 13,600)
- There are approximately nineteen chances in twenty (95%) that the real value falls within the range 922,800 to 977,200 (950,000 + or - 27,200).

The real value in this case is the result we would obtain if we could enumerate the total

population.

The ABS considers that estimates with a relative standard error of 25% or more may be subject to sampling variability too high for most practical purposes.

To determine if an item has a relative standard error of 25% or more, in SuperTABLE, right click in the centre of the table, select annotate cells - standard annotations, and select 'Annotate RSE cut-off values'.

To indicate those cells in spreadsheets with a relative standard error of 25% or more, annotations have been applied prior to dissemination.

Additional information on how standard errors for LFS estimates are produced is available in **Labour Force Survey Standard Errors** (cat. no. 6298.0). A spreadsheet that calculates standard errors for annual family estimates is available in **Labour Force Survey Standard Errors, Data Cube** (cat. no. 6298.0.55.001).

© Commonwealth of Australia

All data and other material produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) constitutes Commonwealth copyright administered by the ABS. The ABS reserves the right to set out the terms and conditions for the use of such material. Unless otherwise noted, all material on this website - except the ABS logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark - is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence